# A Clean Break from Washington: Foreign Influence, Israel, and the COBBWEB of American Politics

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Abstract: This article examines George Washington's Farewell Address (1796) as a foundational guide for American independence of judgment, particularly his warnings about the insidious dangers of foreign influence and excessive partiality. It argues that the bipartisan foreign policy consensus spanning the Clinton, Obama, Bush, and Biden administrations—the COBBWEB—represents a decisive departure from Washington's counsel, embodied most clearly in the 1996 "Clean Break" strategy drafted for Israel. The result has been the erosion of republican independence, the entrenchment of partiality toward a foreign power, and the subordination of American policy to external interests.

# Introduction

George Washington's Farewell Address, published in September 1796, remains one of the most enduring documents of American political thought. Though not binding in law, its warnings carried moral weight as the testament of the Republic's first president. Among its most striking elements were Washington's cautions against foreign influence, partiality, and the illusion of favors between nations. This article argues that contemporary American foreign policy, particularly in the era of the COBBWEB (Clinton, Obama, Bush, Biden), has departed from this guide, succumbing to precisely the dangers Washington foresaw.

# Washington's Farewell Address

Washington identified foreign influence as "one of the most baneful foes of republican government." His Address urged Americans to maintain impartial vigilance, warning that excessive partiality for one foreign nation or dislike of another would corrupt judgment and invite manipulation.

> *"Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake; since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government… Excessive partiality for one foreign nation and excessive dislike of another cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other."*
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> *Washington concluded with a blunt maxim: "There can be no greater error than to expect or calculate upon real favors from nation to nation."*

# The Clean Break Strategy (1996)

In 1996, a policy paper titled "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm" was drafted for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by a group of American policy strategists including Richard Perle, Douglas Feith, and David Wurmser. The document advocated regime change in Iraq, confrontation with Syria and Iran, and the reshaping of the Middle East in Israel's favor. Many of its authors later held senior positions in the U.S. government, where they advanced policies aligned with

this strategy. This represents not impartial vigilance, but precisely the excessive partiality against which Washington warned.

# COBBWEB and the Politics of Partiality

The COBBWEB—Clinton, Obama, Bush, Biden—refers to the bipartisan web of administrations that entrenched U.S. alignment with Israeli priorities. Across these presidencies, American military aid, diplomatic cover, and domestic political structures have reinforced an extraordinary partiality. The United States has provided more aid to Israel than to any other nation since World War II. Political careers are often conditioned upon alignment with pro-Israel positions, while those who question the relationship face marginalisation. Washington foresaw this inversion of loyalty: “Real patriots, who may resist the intrigues of the favorite, are liable to become suspected and odious.”

# Analysis: Departure from Washington’s Counsel

Comparing Washington’s Farewell Address with the Clean Break strategy and the COBBWEB consensus reveals a decisive departure from the Republic’s founding counsel. Instead of impartial vigilance, American policy exhibits systemic partiality. Instead of guarding against the illusion of favors, the U.S. acts as though bound by a client-state relationship. The costs have been borne not only in foreign entanglements and wars, but in the erosion of the independence of American judgment—precisely what Washington deemed essential for republican liberty.

# Conclusion

Washington’s Farewell Address was never binding law, but it was binding in wisdom. His warnings about foreign influence and excessive partiality remain prophetic. The embrace of the Clean Break strategy and the bipartisan COBBWEB of American politics have betrayed that counsel, subordinating the Republic’s independence to the interests of another state. To recover Washington’s guide is not nostalgia, but necessity—for only by reclaiming impartiality can the United States remain truly free.

# References

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